



Addressing Students' Different Learning Style in Teaching Vocabulary through Spelling Bee

Nurhasanah Halim¹, Arrizqi Ramadhan^{2*}, Susilawati³, Retno Dwigustini⁴, Binti Nur Fahmi⁵

(^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Jakarta. ⁵Pondok Pesantren Ibnu Katsir, Bogor, Jawa Barat)

* Corresponding Author, E-mail: arrizqi.azh@bsi.ac.id

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Abstrak

Di Indonesia, teknik drilling, tanya jawab, teknik terjemahan, dan penggunaan media yang minim, masih ada dalam pengajaran kosakata. Hal ini dapat menyebabkan kebosanan dan kurang melekatnya belajar pada siswa. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk melaporkan pengalaman guru saat mengintegrasikan *Spelling Bee* sebagai penilaian pemantauan penguasaan kosakata dan sebagai pertimbangan untuk menentukan instruksi pengajaran yang mungkin. Metode penelitian tindakan digunakan untuk merumuskan serangkaian langkah-langkah sekuensial: refleksi, pengumpulan data, perencanaan, tindakan, dan analisis. Langkah-langkah tersebut bersifat fleksibel dan dapat diulang kapan saja jika diperlukan. Triangulasi data digunakan untuk memvalidasi sumber data ganda yang dikumpulkan. Ada dua temuan utama setelah siklus kedua selesai, yaitu tingkat keterlibatan siswa dan skor siswa meningkat dengan mengintegrasikan *Spelling Bee* dalam aktivitas tersebut. *Spelling Bee* untuk memberikan siswa kegiatan yang bermakna telah tercapai, terutama untuk tujuan pemanasan dan sesekali sebagai sentuhan untuk merefleksikan implementasi DI (*Differentiated Instruction*). Namun, alokasi waktu untuk integrasi ini tidak efisien. Oleh karena itu, integrasi ini berhasil mengatasi gaya belajar siswa muda dan mungkin kurang efektif untuk tingkat sekolah menengah yang lebih tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Gaya Belajar, Siswa, Kosa Kata, Spelling Bee

Abstract

In Indonesia, drills, question and answer technique, translation technique and minimal use of media are still in existence to teach vocabulary. These might lead to students' boredom and learning disengagement. This qualitative study aims to report on teacher's experience when integrating Spelling Bee as a monitoring assessment of vocabulary mastery and as a consideration to specify possible teaching instruction. The action research method was employed to prescribe a set of sequential steps: reflect, get data, plan, act, and analyze. The steps are fluid, flexible and iterative at any point when necessary. Data triangulation was used to validate multiple data sources collected. There were two main findings after the second cycle was complete i.e., students' level of engagement and students score increased by integrating Spelling Bee in the activity. Spelling Bee to equip students with meaningful activities has been achieved especially to serve the purposes of a warm up and an occasional touch to reflect DI implementation. Yet, the time allocation for the integration was inefficiency. Therefore, the integration successfully addresses young students' style of learning and it can be less effective for more higher level of junior high school students.

Keywords: Learning Style, Students, Vocabulary, Spelling Bee

Introduction

Relevant studies have highlighted the impacts of radical changes in the learning process during the pandemic. Among these impacts are the occurrence of learning loss (Kenayathulla & Yemini, 2023). Not only students gradually lose previously learnt competencies because they cannot complete the learning experience at each level, learning loss also consistently grows inequality in opportunities and access of attaining learning (Alejo, et.al., 2023). What has been worse is that students from rural areas and with lower socio-economic background are the most affected.

In Indonesia, learning loss is also inevitable. The loss has amplified learning gap which in fact has been in occurrence prior to the pandemic. Reflecting to this, an effort to stipulate policy in curriculum development to support the flexibility, competency-bases, focused on character and soft skills development, and the alignment of school outcome to the needs of business/ industrial world. The policy is then introduced as Merdeka Belajar. This policy sides the heterogeneous approach to enable teachers and students in their exploration of knowledge repertoire and willingness to grow (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). And, implementing differentiated instruction (DI) is the manifestation of the Merdeka Belajar.

DI takes into consideration that teachers should cater their students' strengths, provide them with opportunities to exhibit their knowledge and skills while offering them assistance when needed during learning process. Additionally, the success of learning should be viewed from teachers' response and extensive use of students' heterogenous background to approach the design of lesson/class activities (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). Moreover, DI weighs four element in relevance to DI implementation. They are content which are the methods used by teachers when knowledge and skills transfer proceeds,

process which are the exercises and practices derives from teacher's instruction for students to perform based on the content), product (the ways students demonstrate their learning and understanding, and affect (how emotions and feelings impact learning). These elemental foundations should be based on student preparedness (entry point at which learning goals are to be reached), interests (affinity for a specific skill or topic), and learning profile (preferred style of learning). The atmosphere (the functioning and tone of the classroom) is another factor related to affect (Gibbs & McKay, 2021).

DI believes that diversity exists in every group of students. And with such diversity, teachers adjust their instruction accordingly. Therefore, its emphasis falls on on-going assessments and adaptations, and flexible grouping strategies. In addition, assessment should also focus on student development during the learning process serving different purposes to achieve: monitoring, controlling and reflecting (Dorfberger & Eyal, 2023; Griful-Freixenet et al., 2020; Stollman et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, the teaching of vocabulary still makes use drills (Hadiyansah et al., 2023), question and answer, translation (Karina Wedhanti et al., 2021) and minimal use of media (Khafidhoh, 2019). This might lead to students' boredom and learning disengagement. Meanwhile, the twenty-first century education offers integrating games into classroom activities which then has played greater role to enhance learners' motivation as long as teachers have relevant competencies and curriculum approach (Nousiainen et al., 2018). Another thing to be highlighted is that English is a compulsory subject for students in junior and senior high school. However, some students might have learnt English since elementary school. This might cause differences in students' vocabulary mastery, In fact, Indonesia is an archipelagic country which makes access to education equal is barrier.

From the view of constructivism, games can equip students with meaningful activities from their learning experience although previous relevant studies also revealed that games are effective but rarely played (Byusa et al., 2020, 2022). Serving such a wide range of purposes in English learning as a warm-up at the start of class, fill-ins when there is excess time at the conclusion of class, or as an occasional touch to reflect differentiation in teaching, games have been employed in language learning now and then. Despite the positives of integration, games can be a waste of time (Zhang, 2018).

A game which is integrated into classroom activities used in this study is Spelling bee. It is a communicative game designed and played either individually or in group to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabulary, acquire ideas and develop correct English usage that will benefit their learning (Webster, 2007). Regarding the implementation of Merdeka Belajar which favors students' different learning style, this classroom action research shall be the avenue for teachers of Junior High School to reflect on the question of "how to address students' different learning style through Spelling Bee and to what extent their vocabulary mastery improved?"

Method

Research Context

The goal of this qualitative study is to report on teacher's experience when integrating Spelling Bee as a monitoring assessment of vocabulary mastery and as a consideration to specify possible teaching instruction. The action research method was employed to prescribe a set of sequential steps: reflect, get data, plan, act, and analyze. The steps are fluid, flexible and iterative at any point when necessary (Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. & Voegtle, 2010). Figure 1 is the steps taken to conduct this recent action research.

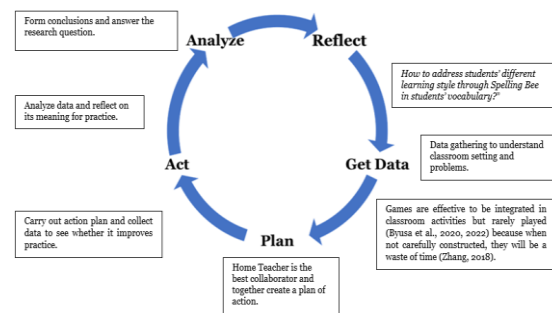


Figure 1. The Research Steps (Adapted from Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. & Voegtle, 2010).

Participants

The participants of this action research are the first level of junior high school located in West Java, Indonesia. There are 19 students participated in this class. English subject is taught twice a week (in total 80 minutes for one week). To reflect is the foundation of action, and to have in collaboration is vital to promote objective conclusion. Hence, collaboration can also ensure multiple perspectives and reduce personal bias in research findings. Collaborators in this study was the home class teacher and a researcher to reflect on the classroom setting and problem and today's educational approach. The other four researchers are responsible for data gathering and literature review, lesson planning and carrying out action, and data analysis and conclusions. To anticipate ethical issues in this study, students' names and school identity will remain anonymous.

Research Instruments and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews, field notes and document analysis were used as the research instruments. Scoring rubric was used to assess students' improvement in vocabulary mastery. Interviews were done twice. The first interview was done as pre-research and was used to gather information of classroom setting and problems during data gathering. Teacher collaborator was the interviewee. Next, an interview was done to gather

students' perceptions of integrating games in their classroom activities. Only three students were interviewed. Student interviewees were randomly and purposively selected for data generation. Meanwhile, documents were used to cohere and contrast findings. Field notes were taken by teacher collaborator and two fellow researchers. Whilst, document analysis was done in relation to review of literature. Data triangulation was used to validate multiple data sources collected (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Gathered data were analysed through three-concurrent flow of action: data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification (from Huberman & Miles in Berg, 2001)

Results and Discussion

1. Integrating Spelling Bee to Address Students' Different Learning Styles in Teaching Vocabulary

The present study intended to achieve three purposes of using games such as Spelling Bee. To boot, it is a reflection of teacher's effort to cater students' differences in implementing DI.

Cycle 1

Gathered data from pre-research reflected the classroom setting and problems. It was found that most students do not know how to correctly pronounce and spell a word. Another finding was that because having a printed dictionary is costly and accessing an online one is limited to financial constraints or school regulations, the meaning of words is teacher-provided. In class, teacher will write the English words and give the Indonesian-equivalent words. After that, students will memorize the words and its equivalences. There is no specific exercise or practice to assess students' vocabulary mastery. Time-inefficiency and boredom should be the main conclusion on vocabulary teaching.

The plan developed by researchers and teacher collaborator was to integrate Spelling Bee at the entry point to check student

preparedness as a warm-up at the start of class. This is intended also to monitor students' heterogenous background and adjust their teaching accordingly. After Spelling Bee was played, students listened to a recording and read a text about a weather. There were two exercises following this activity. Students used the words played in Spelling Bee to fill in the gaps practice and learn how to use the simple present tense in the text. Then to check students' understanding in using the tense, they were assigned to form a sentence but not in relation to weather.

Assessing vocabulary in this cycle was done in a conventional test which was based on a set of target words in relation to weather description and then the mastery was assessed on how accurate students demonstrate their knowledge of using those words (Read, 2000). The text was already modified to suit the purpose of vocabulary assessment.

Based on the action above, it reveals that students' enthusiasm increased and this led to higher student engagement. Students attended the teacher researcher explanation from how to play Spelling Bee and their engagement sustained until the end of lesson. Some students were still shy to get involved. However, the average score of the students was 72.6 or 73. This was still below the standard score of student accomplishment that is 75. Therefore, it is prudent to continue to Cycle Two.

Cycle 2

In Cycle Two, the researchers and teacher collaborator have once again planned the integration of Spelling Bee and a vocabulary-focused subject in an English skill learning and teaching process. But in this cycle, a new list of vocabulary was presented, body parts. To start the class, a prompting question was asked "How do you use simple present tense?" Next, teacher presents the topic and learning agenda. After that, teacher put students in group and then ask them to pick five cards of words used to describe body

parts. Then, the spelling bee is played in groups. The rules were easy that was each student was to spell the letters and another one is writing them on a piece of paper. Following the group assignment was teacher's explanation about using the vocabulary in the simple to form a sentence showing facts.

At this cycle, Spelling was used as an occasional touch to reflect differentiation in teaching. It was meant to address students' style of learning and at the same time to control students' achievement in vocabulary mastery. In Cycle Two, it was found that the average score of students' achievement is 80.3. There was an increase of 26.3 %. At this cycle as well, it was found that students expressed their preference to learn using Spelling Bee. They felt more motivated to learn English, be more confident to practise spelling with their friends, get better score and pass the standard score determined. Therefore, we agreed to complete the cycle in the second one.

2. To what extent the students' vocabulary mastery was improved by integrating Spelling Bee?

After both cycles were complete, there were two main findings students' level of engagement and students score increased by integrating Spelling Bee in the activity. Field notes reflected that when teaching and learning process was progressing, students positively responded to materials. Although there were several difficulties encountered during the first cycle, there was no more significant hiccups at the second cycle. Most students actively participated and practicing to spell the words with their peers. The increase in score is believed to be the impact of students' engagement increase.

Spelling Bee to equip students with meaningful activities has been achieved especially to serve the purposes of a warm up and an occasional touch to reflect DI implementation. Yet, the time allocation for

the integration was inefficiency. It took almost 50% of time allocated for the following activities both in the first and second cycle. Hence, the integration was not proceeded to the third cycle as teacher collaborator objected and decided to adjust for more suitable teaching instruction.

Conclusion

To conclude, integrating Spelling Bee is effective to address students' different learning style in learning vocabulary. It can be used for two purposes of assessing students' level of vocabulary mastery: monitoring and controlling. The integration successfully addresses young students' style of learning but it can be less effective for more higher level of junior high school students.

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